

### **Cheating/True Love**

- Contrast Tom's knowledge of Daisy's cheating with Daisy's knowledge of Tom's cheating. How are their responses and attitudes towards cheating different? Is this a double standard (one rule for women, one rule for men), or are they both simply immoral?
- Using Daisy's decision to cheat to inform your analysis, what position is Fitzgerald taking on fidelity in a relationship? If one person is already cheating, is it okay for the other person to cheat too?
- Does Daisy really love Tom? Does Tom really love Daisy? Does Daisy really love Gatsby? Does Tom really love Myrtle? Use evidence to support your opinion. What is Fitzgerald then stating about the capacity of people of this class to love?
- Can Nick be blamed as the passive accomplice to both Tom's and Daisy's cheating? As a person who describes himself as honest, does he have an obligation to tell, or at least to not witness it? What are our obligations as friends or family members when someone we love is cheating or being cheated on?

### **Social Class**

- Nick says that Gatsby is better than the whole lot of them. Use evidence when you agree or disagree with this statement, and consider each Gatsby: the enigmatic riddle at the beginning of the book, the calculating rich man in the middle, the lovesick boy at the end. Is Gatsby worthy of the title "the GREAT Gatsby"?
- Fitzgerald has Nick call Tom and Daisy "careless people who smash up things and people and then retreat back into their money or their vast carelessness" and let others clean up the mess they made. Is this statement accurate, or is Nick biased? Are there contemporary examples of this sort of behavior?
- Who truly displays class in this book? How was "class" defined in the 1920s, according to the book? How do we define "class" today?
- The book seems to make the argument that people of Tom and Daisy's class are essentially bored, causing their bad behavior. Is it simply the nature of having money, or is there a difference between inherited money and earned money? Is there a connection between Daisy's boredom and ultimate moral failures at the end of the book? Is the problem of boredom limited to the very rich?
- Based on the characters of Tom and Daisy and Jordan, what is Fitzgerald trying to say about the upper class of society? Based on the character of Gatsby, what is he saying about the lower classes? What does Gatsby have that they do not?

### **The American Dream**

- Define "the American dream" (both historically and today if you believe there is a difference).
- Nick says that the American dream was first about individualism, discovery, a pioneering spirit, pursuing happiness. If, then, the dream has been corrupted by the 1920s, then what has it been replaced by? What is Fitzgerald arguing that Americans value instead?

- Is Gatsby's trajectory then an example of achieving the American dream or emblematic of the corruption of it?
- Can the dream be achieved without money – or is success always defined as having money? Use evidence from the book and from real life.
- In the novel, what effect does excess have on morality? What, then, is Fitzgerald's position on materialism?
- Why is Gatsby from North Dakota? Why must he die? Why must Nick return to the Midwest at the end of the book? What is it about the nature of Gatsby's particular version of the American dream that is doomed to failure?
- Why is Fitzgerald's pacing of the information flow about Gatsby important to understanding him at the end?

### **Illusion vs. Reality**

- What truly ruins Gatsby's dream? Is it Daisy herself (consider her choices 4+ years ago, and in the summer of 1922), or is it his fault for building her up in his head to a perfection she could not possibly achieve?
- Which characters are "real"? Which are fake?
- Nick believes himself to be real – honest, non-judgmental – yet where does he actually fit on our spectrum of real vs. fake?
- Tom and Daisy are initially presented as two unmatched people, as different as possible, yet by the end are shown in harmony. What in the true nature of both of them was hidden by illusion early in the book? Are they ultimately more similar than not? And what, then, is Fitzgerald saying about who we are attracted to and most suited to dating?
- Is living off of illusions healthy, or unhealthy? Analyze the illusions and subsequent behavior of the characters in the book, particularly Gatsby (but be sure to include George and Myrtle in this one). Must believing in illusions always end in tragedy, or do people all need some sort of illusions to stay sane?